

Endure And Survive by chaosaroundme (tenderdyke)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016), The Last of Us

Genre: F/F, Fluff, Gore, I'll add tags as the story progresses, Violence, Zombies, also i see that fluff might be a questionable tag but trust me, basically stranger things characters set in tloU universe, el is ellie and max is riley, slightly different to tloU storyline

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Characters: Eleven (Stranger Things), Maxine "Max" Mayfield

Relationships: Eleven/Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Ellie/Riley (The Last of Us)

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Summary:

Ever wondered what would happen if the characters from Stranger Things ended up in the apocalyptic universe of The Last Of Us? Wonder no more.

Jim Hopper is given the task of smuggling a young girl and her girlfriend across zombie-infected America, in order to help find the cure that could save the world. On the way, they meet various people, some who join them on their journey and some with more sinister plans.

Endure And Survive

Author's Note:

This is dedicated to my best friend (@bevvie-darling on tumblr). One year ago today we started talking, but it feels like I've known you forever. Here's a fic inspired by the two things we bonded over from the beginning.

"Max, are you sure about this?" El asked nervously, watching her best friend hop through the window.

"El, chill! Look, I promise you, it's gonna be fine. I really want you to see this." El drew a sharp breath at the sight of Max's hopeful eyes looking up at her.

There was no way she could say no to that face. Rolling her eyes, she swung her legs over the windowsill and jumped onto the small ledge below. Leaving the window open a crack so that they could get in again later, El hurried to catch up to Max, who was already a few paces ahead.

"Where are we even going?"

"It's a surprise!" Smiled Max, grabbing hold of El's hand. The girls both tried to ignore the rush of electricity between them, not knowing that the other was feeling the exact same thing. "Um, so, you know the big building opposite the base, right?"

"The one we're not supposed to go in to?" El side eyed Max wearily.

"Yeah, that one! So i went in, and, well..." Max tugged the smaller girl to a broken window. "I found a back entrance. I mean, I went 'round the front, but I figured you'd feel safer going in here. This is... okay, right? I mean, we can go back if you want, but there's something really cool inside, and I just thought, well, we could-"

"Max, it's okay. Thank you." El squeezed Max's hand, smiling up at her.

Relief flooded Max's face. "Okay, well, in that case- after you, my lady!" El took a deep breath and climbed through the small opening, Max following her eagerly. The girls could faintly make out the outlines of broken-down escalators and abandoned storefronts.

"Wait, I've heard of places like this! Is this a mall?" Looking around in excitement, the huge shopping centre was empty and silent.

"Yeah, but, wait, shit," Max flipped a switch in a panel El hadn't even noticed. "God dammit, the power isn't on. Hey Ellie, you up for an adventure? We gotta get to the power switch."

"Don't call me that," El absentmindedly complained, knowing full well that she never wanted Max to stop giving her nicknames. The two girls walked fast, following cables and signs in the hopes of finding the power source, until Max suddenly stopped.

"Holy shit, El. Look. What kind of store is this?" She pointed at a window display of dusty Halloween masks and costumes. "Do you think people used to wear that kind of thing, before everything happened?" She trailed her fingers over the glass.

"I don't know, that doesn't look like anything I've seen before," El watched the look on Max's face fade from wonder to wistfulness. "Do you wanna see if we can find a way in?" Seeing Max's face light up was worth the initial unease she had felt about entering. After all, there could be Infected inside, maybe even Clickers. It didn't sound like there was though, and El pushed the thought aside. Looking over the storefront, she saw an open window above the door. "Max, look!"

"Sweet! Good one, El," Max beamed at her, and El would have done anything for her in that moment. "Can you give me a boost?"

Nodding, El walked over and helped Max into the window. She heard a soft thump and a muttered 'Oof.' as Max landed, and waited for her to open the door. Sure enough, it swung open only second later, and El cautiously walked in.

"Max? Max, are you-" She cut off her question as Max jumped out at her, wearing a clown mask. "Jesus, you nearly gave me a heart attack!"

Max giggled, pulling the plastic off her head. "Here, I found the perfect one for you," She led El towards a shelf full of masks similar to the one Max had. "Look!" In her hand she held a classic zombie mask. It didn't necessarily look like the Infected, but it also didn't not look like the Infected.

"Oh my god, Max," El shuddered and rolled her eyes, pushing the mask away. "You know I hate those."

"Yeah, I know. Sorry," Grabbing El's hand, Max squeezed it quickly before letting go. "Hey, look at this!" Max pulled the smaller girl over to a window display full of costumes and spooky knick-knacks.

"Ask Skeleseer a question and shake for your fortune..." El picked up the plastic skull, reading the logo out loud. She shook it, feeling kinda dumb. "Okay. Are we gonna die today?" The toy remained silent, and El rolled her eyes. "Nothing!"

"You gotta turn it over, genius." Max grinned at her best friend, who smiled sheepishly.

"Oh," She turned the skull over, reading from the small glass at the base. "'Seems dreadfully unlikely.' Whew, what a relief. Let's see what else you got, Skeleseer. Will we ever get out of this stupid quarantine zone? 'The answer is in limbo.' So, there's a chance? Does my cru-" El trailed off, turning red as she realised that Max was stood beside her. "Oh, um, look! I think that door leads outta here!"

The two girls hastily made their way out of the store, dropping the plastic toy where it lay. Pushing the double doors open, they were greeted by two cars on pedestals on the floor below. Looking over the balcony, Max smirked at El.

"I have an idea. See those cars?" She picked up a brick, weighing it in her hand. "Red one's yours, I'll be blue. We throw bricks. Whoever breaks all the windows to their car first, wins."

"Please, you know I'm the brick master." El smiled, running over to the other balcony side.

"Sure, you are. Loser has to... answer a question. No sarcasm." Her

heart fluttered slightly at the thought of what she could be asked if she lost, or what she could ask El.

“You’re on.” El grinned, deftly taking aim and smashing one of the windows to her car.

“Oh, crap.” Max hurriedly threw her brick but missed, reducing El to giggles. Despite the distraction, El still won, and she already knew exactly what she was going to ask the redhead.

“So, Max... do you like anyone? From the base? Y’know, like, really like anyone?”

“Sure, I do, Ellie.” Max said, trying to be confident as she took a step forward. “Y-“

The girls jumped apart as the speakers placed throughout the town crackled to life, the same woman as always announcing that it was time for soldiers of the 3am shift to report.

Rubbing her neck, Max gestured toward some wires going through a double door marked ‘Employees Only’. “The power switch is down this way, uh, follow me.”

As they made their way through dim hallways, only lit up by their weak flashlights, the girls thought about what could have happened if they hadn’t been interrupted. El contemplated whether Max was really gonna say ‘You’, or if it was maybe someone else from the base. Whose name started with a Y? Meanwhile, Max wondered if she really would have told El the truth.

Upon reaching the right room, Max broke open the power box to reveal a switch. “M’lady,” she announced, bowing to El. “Would you care to do the honours?”

“Is this really gonna work? If it does, won’t the soldiers see?”

“El, trust me. The lights on the outside don’t work. But in here? Try it.” Briefly wondering about how exactly Max knew all this, El took a deep breath and pulled on the switch. The overhead lights softly buzzed and flickered before settling into a warm yellow light. Max looked at El’s face, bathed in light and wonder, and knew instantly

she'd done the right thing. "C'mon, there's more."

She dragged El down some stairs and into a courtyard of the mall which was now brightly lit up, neon signs and glowy lights twinkling at them from all directions. In the centre was a carousel, mirrors and decorations reflecting and casting shadows.

"What..." Slowly walking up to the carousel, El trailed her hand along one of the intricately painted horse's manes. "What is this?"

"Get on!" Max encouraged her, stood in front of a small panel to the side of the ride.

El looked at her incredulously before swinging one leg over the side of the wooden horse. "Now what?"

"This." Pressing something in the panel, Max stood back and watched at the carousel creaked to life, tinny fairground music pouring out of the speakers. The horses began moving up and down, slowly but steadily, and El gasped in amazement.

"Max, get on! Come on!" She called to the other girl, but Max was so content with just watching the delight on El's face that by the time she actually registered what was being said and got on a horse herself, the ride was grinding to a halt. "What, no! Oh, come on."

Max jumped off the horse and pointed towards a large glowing box. "Look, the photo machine is working!"

The girls ran towards the bright photo booth and squeezed in. "So, do we just... tap it?" Asked El, looking at the flashing screen.

"I don't know, try!" Max gestured towards it, shrugging, and El hesitantly touched the screen. 'Choose your category!' chirped a bubbly voice from the speakers inside the machine. The screen showed three options: 'Cool', 'Friends', and 'Love'. El tapped 'Love', and Max smirked. "Trying to woo me, huh?"

"Shut up," El rolled her eyes, but stuck with her choice. The girls could suddenly see themselves on the screen, a countdown starting. "Quick, let's do... scary!" Baring their teeth and holding up their hands like claws, they began giggling.

“Okay, okay, now silly!” Max nudged El, and they stuck their tongue out at the camera. The girls kept up the game until the machine informed them that their photos were ready. The screen showed an ‘f’ in a blue square, with the words ‘Post to Facebook?’ written above. “What’s a ‘facebook’?”

“Maybe it prints our faces in a book?” El suggested, and Max shrugged.

“Whatever, we don’t need that. Give us our pictures!” She triumphantly tapped the screen, only for her face to fall as a message came up saying ‘Error’. “Oh, what? Come on.”

The girls began hitting the plastic around the screen, trying to change something, and the screen kept showing more and more ‘Error’ messages until –

“Oh my god. I think we broke it.” The lights flickered out and the screen went black, and they looked at each other sheepishly. Laughing at their situation, the girls slumped back against the cool surface of the photo booth. “Oh, well. This was fun, Max. Thank you for bringing me here. We should probably get back though...”

“Wait, not yet! Do you hear that music? Let’s see where it’s coming from!” Max pleaded, desperate to spend more time with El, away from the soldiers and watchful eyes of the base.

“I, ugh, fine.” Smiling, El let herself be dragged through hallways and stores until they reached the source of the music. It was a department store, with a whole section full of CDs, records, and music players.

“Holy shit, El! Look at all this! Do you still have your Walkman?” Max spun on the spot, taking in the sight before her.

“Yeah of course, I take it everywhere. Here,” Handing the music player to Max, El suddenly remembered that the tape she had in the Walkman was... the tape that Max gave her. Shit. “Max, wai-“

“Aw, El, is this the mixtape I made for you? You sap.” She teased, but secretly Max was overjoyed. She had spent hours trying to decide what the perfect mix of songs would be for El, and when she’d given

it to her she was terrified that El would laugh at her, or think it was stupid.

Carefully, she took the tape out of the Walkman and put it into a black box hooked up to some speakers. El had no idea what any of the technology was, but Max seemed to know. She pressed a button and music came pouring from all around them, and when Max jumped up onto a display table and started dancing, El had to stifle a laugh. The whole situation was just so crazy. Here they were, the only living people in a mall, blasting music and dancing like normal teenagers.

Holding out her hand, Max yelled over the music, “El, come on! Get up here!”. El grabbed Max’s hand, and soon both of them were jumping around and laughing.

A somewhat slower song started playing, and El stopped dancing and looked at the girl in front of her. Max was so beautiful.

“What?” Max asked, self-consciously tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

Stepping forward, El took hold of Max’s hand and pulled her closer to her, and closer, until-

Their lips touched, and it was sweet and innocent and perfect and all they’d ever wanted.

El pulled away after a couple seconds, blushing. “Sorry.”

“What are you sorry for?” Max shook her head, smiling uncontrollably. “El, I- Shit, shit shit!”

A hoard of Infected tumbled through the doors of the store, drawn to the loud music. Grabbing a small handgun from her bag, Max shot at the closest ones whilst El watched in shock. “El, come on, we have to go!”

Snapping out of her confused state, El jumped down off the table and grabbed her backpack. “Where do we go?” She cried as they started running away.

“Anywhere but here! Quick, follow me!” Max took a turn and went

through a hidden door. The girls ran side by side, desperately looking for a way out. "There, the scaffolding! We can climb out!"

They began to climb, the sounds of Infected getting closer and closer. Max reached the top and held out her hand for El to take, but just as El was reaching for her, the scaffolding broke, and El crashed down to the ground. At that moment, a small group of Infected broke through the hastily made barricade and began trying to find a way to El, who was now lying defenceless on the floor.

"Max, go, get out of here!" El pleaded, but it was too late. Max was already halfway down the metal framework, gun in hand. She jumped to the floor and began shooting any approaching Infected, when one grabbed her from behind. "Max!"

Max began beating at the undead monstrosity, desperately trying to get back to El, who was being attacked by an Infected of her own. El grabbed a brick and smashed it into the head of the Infected, pushing the now still body off hers. She ran towards Max, who was still struggling, the gun having been knocked out of her hand. El grabbed it and fired, hoping for the best.

Silence.

The Infected were dead.

"Max, are you okay?" El ran over, brushing her hands over Max's body as she searched for any possible wounds or, worse, bites.

"Yeah, I'm fine, but El," Max took hold of her hand. "Your arm."

Looking down at her right arm, El felt her stomach drop. There was a bite. It was still dripping blood. "No, no, no, no, this can't be happening. I can't become one of those things, Max, I can't, this isn't real, I, fuck!" Hot tears ran down her face as she took the bite.

"El, I'm so sorry, this is all my fault." Max whispered, sobs hiccupping in her throat. She'd gotten her best friend and the girl she loved killed.

"No, don't say that. Look, you need to get out of here, I don't know how long I have until I turn," El angrily wiped her tears away. Just

when everything was starting to right for once. “Or... you could stay. I’d rather you shoot me when I turn than I run around as an Infected.”

“If that’s really what you want, I’ll wait with you until it’s time.” Max promised, trying to steel her nerves. There was no way she would be able to do it. How could she murder El?

“Hey, it’s almost poetic. We can wait together until I’ve lost my mind for good.” El sniffed, trying to stop herself from crying any more.

“Come here.” Max yanked El so that she was sat down beside her. “Crazy or not, you’ll always be my El.”

“Max?” El whispered hoarsely as the sun set the next day. “I think something’s not right. Why haven’t I turned yet?”